

Journey through Lent – Week 5

Phase 1: Meditation on Baptism and the Love of God

Our Lenten Journey is a baptismal journey into the heart of God's love. So we begin by invoking our baptisms: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son +, and of the Holy Spirit: Amen."



Midweek: the love of the Spirit. Reflection and Prayer.

Phase 2: Intercession in and with Christ, by the power of the Spirit

How many were able to join Christ in interceding for others with the Father using our [Lenten Prayer Sheet](#)? How did it affect your relationship to God and the other members of St. Peter?

Phase 3: Holy Conversation – Where is Jesus Going?

Previously: Israel, the Desert of Temptation, Bethlehem/Nazareth (the city of the king, yet cities "on the margins" in terms of earthly wealth and honor), the Mount of Teaching, to those spiritually "on the margins."

Today: Continues the theme of coming to the Mount of Teaching and the Spiritual Margins, standing as the fulfillment of Moses/Law, Wisdom, and Prophets. Adds: Comes to the world through the Church.

Review: the Beatitudes

- "Blessed [*makarios*]": "Happy, fortunate, flourishing"
 - OT: blessed is the one who refuses the way of the wicked (Ps 1) to take refuge in God (Ps 2), wait expectantly for the Lord's action (Isa 30), walk in God's wisdom (Ps 1, Prv 3), and care for those in need (Prv 14).
 - 1st century context: "blessed are the gods, the dead, and the elite" who are beyond the fray of suffering; Beatitudes – no, blessed are those in the fray, right where they are and as they are.

The Beatitudes II (Mt 5:3-11):

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
3. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Same “reversed blessing” in last four: the world values the mighty warrior and the profligate, not the merciful, pure, peacemaking, and persecuted. But Jesus says these are blessed, and will receive what is good.

What do you think these last four beatitudes would have meant to the early church, which faced much enmity and persecution from others?

Note the parallels between Beatitude 6 and Ps 24:3-6 - “Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. ⁵He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. ⁶Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.”

What makes a heart “pure,” and what do you make of the specific link between purity and “seeing God” / “being in his presence”?

Notice the similarity of the Beatitudes with Ps 18:25-7 – “²⁵With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; ²⁶with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous. ²⁷For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down.”

- Sidebar – Psalm 18, King David and 2 Sam 22

This seems to make God’s response to us contingent on our action toward him. How do we square that with the idea of justification by grace through faith?

Dr. Lessing also broaches the next part of the Sermon the Mount, which includes the Lord’s Prayer.

- He notes that the first half of the prayer is all about God and his love and power (Our Father, whose kingdom comes and whose will is done), the second half about our weakness and need (for bread, for forgiveness, for deliverance from temptation and evil): the first gives us reassurance in the second!
- Likewise, on Thursday of next week, he will note that the Lord’s Prayer is the center of the Sermon on the Mount, and that the center of the Lord’s Prayer is: “forgive, as we forgive others.”

How does this petition relate to the logic and theology of Psalm 18 above?